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## AN ANCIENT LETTER,

SOMEWHAT MODERNIZED IN STYLE

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To the members of the Christian Church in Thessalonica, Paul and Timothy and Silas send Greeting. The grace of God be with you, and may all things be well with you.

Whenever I pray I always give thanks to God concerning you, and remember continually before our heavenly Father the work to which your faith has impelled you, and the toil to which your love has led you, and the patient endurance which your hope for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ has given you. For I am confident respecting you, brothers beloved of God, that you are God's elect. For when we were with you and preached the gospel to you we had the consciousness that we were not uttering empty words, but that we were speaking in power, and with the Holy Spirit, and we were fully assured that our words were not to be without effect. Our conduct also on your behalf was consonant with our speech, as you, I am sure, remember. And you on your part accepted our message with a joy given by the Holy Spirit, and this even though you were subjected to sore persecution. Thus in your joy under persecution you became imitators both of us and our Lord Jesus, and in your turn also a pattern for imitation by all the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia. For by reason of your conduct the Lord's message has been sounded forth in Macedonia and Achaia, and your faith in God has been so spoken of everywhere, that we find the gospel preached in advance of us. For the people themselves are talking about you, and are telling how we came to you, and were received, and how you cast away your idols and turned to serve a God that is living and real, and to wait for his Son to come

from the heavens, even Jesus whom God raised from the dead and who is our Saviour from the wrath to come.

For you remember, brethren, that our coming among you was not as of men crushed and shorn of power; on the contrary, though we were fresh from the sufferings and outrageous insults which we had endured at Philippi, with confidence in our God we spoke out boldly and declared to you the gospel of God, even in the midst of much conflict. For our preaching has not its source in delusion on our part, nor in any selfish motive, nor is it uttered with intent to deceive our hearers, but we speak as is befitting men who have been entrusted by God with the gospel, not seeking to please men but God, before whose scrutiny our hearts, we know, are open. We can appeal to you that we never used flattery. God is our witness that no hidden covetousness moved us, and that we never sought the praise of men either yours or others; although we might have claimed honor as Christ's apostles. But we were as simple and frank as babes among you, and as free from selfishness as a nurse when it is her own child for whom she cares. Our hearts were so full of affection for you that we were glad not only to impart unto you the gospel, but to pour out our very lives for you, so dear had you become to us. I need not remind you of our labor and toil among you, how we worked night and day that we might not be dependent on you for support, and meantime preached the gospel to you. You are our witnesses and God also how holy and upright and blameless was our conduct toward you who believed, and how, as a father his children, we exhorted you and encouraged you and charged you to walk worthily of the God who called you unto his kingdom and glory.

We thank God continually also that when you heard our message, you not only received it, but accepted it as a message from God, as it is in fact, a divine word that works in the hearts of believers. For you, brethren, followed in the steps of the Christian churches in Judea, suffering the same things at the hands of your fellow-countrymen that they endured from the unbelieving Jews, who not only slew the Lord Jesus, as they had the prophets, but drove us out. They are displeasing to God

and are enemies of mankind, seeking to prevent us from preaching to the Gentiles that they may be saved. So do they continually fill up the measure of their sins. But the divine wrath is already upon them ; their final judgment is near at hand.

But to return to our own affairs, having been separated for a time from you, dear brothers, out of sight I mean, by no means alienated in heart, we have by reason of this separation only the more earnestly longed with strong desire to see your faces. For we were on the point—I should say I, Paul, was—more than once, of coming to you, and were prevented only by obstacles interposed by Satan. For what have I to live for, what hope or joy or crown of rejoicing have I, if it be not in you and in the hope of presenting you before Jesus Christ when he comes. Verily you are my glory and my joy. When therefore I could no longer endure the suspense of absence from you and of ignorance concerning your state, I chose to be left alone at Athens and sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the work of the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in the matter of your faith in Christ, that you might not be shaken in the persecutions that you are enduring. For you know yourselves that Christians must expect persecution ; to this they are appointed. For when we were with you we told you beforehand that we were certain to be persecuted, and you know that it happened as we told you. When therefore I could no longer endure the suspense I sent to learn about your faith, fearing lest the tempter had tempted you and my labor should go for naught. But now that Timothy has come and brought me good news about your faith and love and has told me that you remember me with affection, continually longing to see me as I do to see you, I have been comforted about you, finding, in all my distress and affliction, consolation in your faith. For now we live if you stand fast in the Lord. How can I thank God enough for the joy with which we rejoice before God on your account, while night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see your faces and strengthen the weak places of your faith !

May our God and heavenly Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ remove the obstacles in the way of our coming to

you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, until your love equals that which we have toward you, and may he so establish your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our heavenly Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his holy ones.

Finally, brethren, by virtue of our spiritual union with the Lord Jesus, we entreat and exhort you that you will conduct yourselves as we taught you how to behave in order to please God. I know that you are thus behaving, but I beg you to abound more and more in such conduct. For you know what injunctions we gave you, having ourselves received them from the Lord Jesus. For it is the will of God that you should become holy, and in particular that you keep yourselves from fornication; let each of you have his own wife, and live in chaste and honorable marriage, not in the lustful manner which prevails among the nations that know not God; and let no one of you infringe upon a brother's rights in this matter, because God is an avenger concerning all these things, even as we told you before and enjoined you accordingly. For God called us not to live filthy lives but holy. Therefore if any one of you rejects this teaching, he rejects not a man but that God that gives his Holy Spirit unto you.

Now concerning mutual Christian love there is no need for me to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another, and indeed you do love all the brethren in all Macedonia. But we exhort you brethren to continue improving, and to make it your ambition to be quiet, and to attend to your own business, and to work with your hands as we charged you to do, that you may have the esteem of those who are not Christians, and may have enough for your needs.

And now brethren I desire to say a word about those who from time to time fall asleep in death, that you may not grieve, as do the heathen, who have no hope. For if, as we believe, Jesus died and rose again, so also will God through Jesus bring again with him those who have fallen asleep. For having received it from the Lord I give to you the assurance that those of us who shall be alive, that shall survive until the Lord comes,

shall have no advantage over those that have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with voice of archangel and trumpet of God, and of those in Christ the dead shall rise first; then we, the living, that shall survive, shall together with him be caught up in the clouds into the air to meet the Lord. And so we shall always be with the Lord. So then comfort one another with these words.

But as to the times of these events, I need say nothing. For you yourselves know exactly that Jehovah's day comes as a thief in the night. When men are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden there comes upon them destruction, as travail comes upon the woman that is with child, and there is no escape. But you brethren are not in darkness to be overtaken, like thieves, by the *day*, for you are sons of light, sons of day. Belonging therefore not to darkness nor to night, let us not be asleep like the rest of the world, but let us be watchful and sober. For those that sleep sleep at night, and those that are drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to day, let us be sober, and let us put on a breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For we were not destined by God to be the objects of his wrath, but to attain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ; and he gave his life for us that whether our lives on earth are prolonged, or we sleep, we may in either case live, together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you are already doing.

We entreat you brethren respecting your pastors who toil among you and are your religious leaders and admonitors, that you give them due recognition and that you esteem them very highly in love, because of their work. Live in harmony one with another. We beseech you brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the disheartened, sustain the weak, be patient with all. Let none of you return evil for evil to any one, but seek continually that which is for your mutual welfare and the general good. Rejoice always, pray continually, under all circumstances be thankful. For this is what God wills should through Jesus Christ come to pass respecting you. Quench not the Spirit, and do not disregard utterances of prophecy; put all

things to the test, that which is good hold fast, and from every kind of evil abstain. And may God himself, the God of Peace, sanctify you so that you may be perfect, and may you be preserved entire—spirit, soul, and body—to appear without blame when our Lord Jesus Christ comes. Faithful is he that called you, and he will do it.

My brothers, pray also for us.

Give Christian greeting unto all the brethren. I charge you before the Lord that this letter be read to all the members of the church.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.